

Verses by S.F.A.

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VERSES.



VERSES

BY

SARAH FRANCES ALLEYNE

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ITA N' È BEATRICE IN L' ALTO CIELO,
NEL REAME OVE GLI ANGELI HANNO PACE,
E STA CON LORO; E VOI, DONNE, HA LASCIATE.



MY THOUGHTS.

I WANT to write my thoughts to-night,
Such, that is, as are not too shy
To let me draw them forth to light
From deep soul caverns where they lie.
I think those caverns seem to grow
Deeper and deeper evermore,
My thoughts find hiding-places now
They never used to find of yore.
Time was, unbidden they would rise
And answer to my lightest call,
But now my summons they despise,
And come disguised, or not at all.
Sometimes I whisper to my heart

“ Let them alone, the wayward things !
Acts are of thoughts the better part,
Those are the rivers, these the springs.”
“ Yea, sooth,” replies my heart, “ and yet
Acts without thoughts are nothing worth ;
The river ought not to forget
The hidden source that gave it birth ;
And wishing will not charm to rest
The restless creatures of the brain ;
They live, expressed or unexpressed,
You seek to stifle them in vain.”

I seek it not ; I try to-night,
Here as I sit beside the fire,
To give these creatures air and light,
Fulfilling thus my heart's desire.

They live indeed ! My heart spake truth.
I see them pass in long array,—

The dear companions of my youth,
The new-made friends of yesterday;
The giants that I could not hold,
The little elves that dance along,
As I have seen them dance of old
In realms of fancy or of song;
Angels of hope with wings whose sound
Brought comfort to my darkest day;
And fiends of doubt who waited round,
Like vultures by a dying prey;
The thought I found beside the sea
The day I smiled, though joy had flown,
To feel that Ocean's heart could be
As vexed and restless as my own;
The thought that made the tears o'erflow
Their fevered brinks and fill my eyes,
The while I watched the fields of snow
Upborne on mountains to the skies;
White peaks, like aspirations, rose

And pierced the endless depths of blue—
I saw a type in those fair snows
That thrilled my spirit through and through ;
The highest, bare and lightning-riven,
Dweller in purest, calmest air,
Seemed almost to have entered Heaven
In one great burst of yearning prayer ;
And then arose an angel form
At sunset, when the snows were red,
After a day of cloud and storm,
And “ Light at Eventide,” it said.

I see them all as in a glass,
They fade into the world of dreams ;
The moonbeams whiten on the grass,
And sparkle on the little streams.
I wonder, on that brighter shore,
Which lies beyond the night of death,
Shall these my thoughts be mine once more,

Be there, as here, my spirit's breath ?
Those that were angels, glorified
Beyond what earth can understand ;
Those only that were fiends, denied
A place within the golden land ?
Or will two thoughts absorb my soul
With all their vague immensity,—
Through timeless ages' ceaseless roll,—
God's love and His eternity ?

January 30, 1869.

IN THE DAFFODIL VALLEY.

O SWEET spring day that wanest now,
Drop not into the dark abyss,
Before upon thy gentle brow
My love has set one parting kiss ;

And striven, although with faltering touch,
To paint one picture for the walls,
Where Memory ever hangeth such
To glorify her treasure halls.

O daffodillies, bring me gold !
And periwinkles, cloudy blue !
Come violets, and let me hold
My brush a little while in you !

Last snowdrop lingering in the wood
The earliest primrose bud to greet,—
White spirit, o'er my spirit brood,—
Bless me, me also, O my sweet!

Old yews that with unchanging frown
Survey the changes of the glade,
From April green to Autumn brown,—
O give me of your sombre shade!

Soft downy willow palms that gleam
Through leafless copses here and there,
Like peaceful thought or happy dream,
Breaking a sullen mood of care,

From you I ask the gentle light
That made the sunshine of that day!
O fairest heaven, nor dark, nor bright,
But full of tender melting grey,

Send me the solemn atmosphere,
The wondering stillness of the place,
The sense of showers drawing near,
The infant blossoms' upturned face !

And in my picture's magic glass
A silver rivulet shall flow,
And sway the cresses and the grass
With restful motion to and fro ;

And little birds shall chirp and tell
Of future homes in future bowers ;
And buds shall ever grow and swell,
Yet never change to leaves and flowers.

And when the years that earthward roll
Across, across eternity,
Shall close around my shrinking soul,
And darken all the light in me,

When times of hungry dearth prevail,
And songs of birds delight no more,
And, last and worst ! " desire shall fail,"
Then, Memory, open wide thy door,

And take me to thy paradise,
Where no avenging angel stands
With flaming sword and burning eyes
To drive us into desert lands !

There bid me rest and gaze my fill
On pleasant pictures ever mine,
On wood and stream and daffodil,
Transfigured with a light divine.

O sweet spring day that now art fled
To dwell with all the ages gone,
A grace for thee my heart hath said,
A grace from thee my life hath won !

March 7, 1872.

A SPIRIT IN PRISON.

THE world is full of eloquent voices,
But answer maketh my heart to none ;
The wild west wind in his strength rejoices,
The great trees bend to him one by one ;

The ash shrinks back from his rough caresses,
The pine sobs low on his heaving breast ;
He tangles the lady birch's tresses,
And woos the sorrowful yew to rest ;

He makes sweet music among the grasses,
And in the reeds by the river's brink ;
He stirs the ripples, and as he passes,
The snowy lily-buds rise and sink.

The Sun looks down with his burning glances,
Thrilling the heart of the leaping waves ;
Louder and louder as each advances,
I hear their thunder among the caves.

I see the surf with its curves of whiteness
Pouring itself on the yellow sand,
The while the sky with its arch of brightness
Lovingly broods over sea and land,—

And purple and gold with gorse and heather,
Robing themselves as the Kaisers do,
Rise the hills in the August weather,
Up from the white and into the blue.

And still in the midst my heart is sleeping
The numb cold sleep that is worse than pain,
Hardened to stone with its long, long weeping,—
What shall awake it to life again ?

I sit like a captive, waiting, waiting,
Seeing the world through my prison bars,
Beauty and life without the grating,
Within, no shining of sun or stars.

No whispered secrets with western breezes,
No pulse of joy with the bounding sea,—
The summer rain on my threshold freezes,
And earth's fair presences turn from me.

Yet would I keep through the gloom and sorrow,
Faith in the sunshine around, above;—
If God should bid me go forth to-morrow,
I must be ready, to hope and love.

The Father of lights can make the blending
Of outer and inner lights once more,
I wait with patience His time for sending
His angel to open my prison door.

January, 1870.

“THE LORD HATH SENT HIS
ANGEL.”

THE angel hath come ! My heart hath risen ;
He touched my fetters, they straightway fell ;
A light hath found me within the prison,
The guards that kept it are sleeping well.

I know not when ! The night hours unnumbered
Knotted themselves in a weary chain,
Sweet voices moved me while yet I slumbered,
I turned and listened, and slept again.

I heard no sound ; but the iron portal
Is opened wide, and the beauty-gleams
Are free to pass on the ways immortal
Between my soul and the land of dreams.

I saw no form ; but the mighty angel,
Whether his name be legion or one,
Hath surely burst with his glad evangel
The bars that blackened the earth and sun.

O western breezes, your fierce love-greeting
Is mine once more as it used to be !
O restless waves, I can feel your beating
Throbbing deep down in the heart of me !

O valleys starry with primrose clusters,
Where stars of winter so lately lay,—
O wind-flowers blending your gentle lustres,
Lighting fair April along to May,—

O mossy banks where the buds are leaning
To hear the voice of the stream below,—
O netted boughs with your soft shades screening
Nooks where wood-sorrel and stitchwort grow—

O terraced heights all ablaze with glory,
Like golden stairs to the world above,—
O wave-worn fortresses, scarred and hoary,—
Speak to me,—take from me love for love !

The great spring flood with its myriad flashes
Pulses and quivers tumultuously ;
Hither and thither it sways and dashes,
Bearing me swift on its currents free.

O could I sing like the clear-voiced thrushes !
But ah ! sad murmurs are in mine ears,
And now and again o'er my song there rushes
A minor cadence that sounds like tears.

And then, O then, without note of warning,
A sudden cloud on the glory falls,
And through the gates of the sunny morning
There comes a vision of prison walls.

April 26, 27, 1874.

A MARTINMAS NIGHT'S DREAM.

I SAW in sleep an Eagle, golden brown,
Sweeping across a waste of northern sky,
And as his circles neared, I bent me down

Beneath the lightnings of his stormy eye,
And shuddered at the strong majestic wings
That bore with them the death that I must die;

Yet shuddering felt a calm, like one who brings
Bright sparkling water out of darkest well,
Or sweetest song from loathliest dungeon sings,

Or dreams of joy's high heaven in pain's deep hell.
Then shadows touched, and feathers pressed my
side,

And far more soothingly than words can tell

Those great eyes gazed, as though they had descried
My hidden terrors, and would have me know
How shamelessly and grievously they lied.

Ah me, my Eagle! Shall it yet be so
When life is done? Shall mysteries profound
That stunned afar our foolish hearts and slow

Grow tender to us when they wrap us round?
And death perchance the tenderest,—that, lo!
Where fear abounded love may more abound.

June, 1874.

AN INVITATION.

TO M. F. G.

COME to me, heart that is one with mine,
For the streams are running low,
And the leaves have lost their dewy shine,
And the flowers their fresh spring glow ;
And now and again sad voices sing
In the lonely forest ways,
And sorrowful bells sad dirges ring
For the summer's dying days.
Come ! and the spring shall rise again
With her buds and birds and flowers,
And quickening drops of April rain
Shall thrill through the thirsty bowers ;

And the mournful passing-bells shall cease
To trouble the balmy air,
And the brooks once more shall murmur peace
Through the weary land of care.

Come! for the morning is past and gone,
And shadows are creeping round,
And chasing the sunbeams one by one
To the far-off upland ground;
And winds sweep down from the frozen snows,
With thoughts of a long, long night,
To fall at an hour that no man knows
With a darkness infinite.

Come! and the sun shall go forth once more
Through the glowing eastern skies,
And night shall flee, as she fled of yore,
At sight of his burning eyes;
And morning breezes again shall play
In mazes of forest green,

And phantoms of twilight melt away
In a flood of golden sheen.

Come! for Time's Amazon-river is wide,
Its currents are swift and strong,
And winds may sunder and waves divide
The souls that it bears along ;
And I want to bind you fast to me,
So fast that the bond may hold,
When we leave the river, and reach the sea
That washes the land of gold ;
So fast that whether the sky above
Be an arch of grey or blue,
I still may bask in the light of love,
That streams to my soul from you ;
So fast that whether we sleep or wake,
Float on in the sun or shade,
No outer or inner thing may break
This bond that our love has made.

A LOVE SONG.

TO M. F. G.

DEAR, there is that in my heart for you,
Which is to the thing I say
What the windless currentless depth of blue
Is to the flying spray;

What the sun in his quenchless burning might
Is to the sparks that shiver,
And flash along with a changeful light,
On some swift rolling river ;

What the siren's voice in the fisher's ear
Is to the dreamy sound,
Which the listening shepherd can faintly hear
On the far-off pasture ground.

Can you measure the sea by the flake of foam?
The sun by the glint of fire?
Can you guess the strains in the siren's home
By the whispers wafted higher?

Ah! weaker than echo or spray or spark,
The might of its source to prove,
Is the voice that I send through the silent dark
To utter my soul's great love.

And yet as the sea for very unrest
Gives forth white foam to the wind,
To tell as it lies on the earth's still breast
Of the depth that it leaves behind;—

As the sun for very excess of gold
Must pour himself over the streams,
And babble of treasures too great to hold,
In little tremulous beams ;—

As the siren's song cannot rest below
In its own delicious thrills,
But yearns till its echoings overflow
The slopes of the rocky hills ;—

So my restless love is athirst to speak
One broken stammering word,
Though voice be feeble and language weak,
And the best be still unheard.

Then take this foam from its hidden deep,
This spark from its hidden sun,
These few faint notes of the song I keep
To sing you when life is done.

November 14, 1870.

SUGGESTED BY A SONATA OF
BEETHOVEN.

NO. 27, OP. 90. (*Second Movement.*)

O WEEP not faded bowers !

The spring shall come again,
And wake your sleeping flowers

With gentle drops of rain ;—

Our human woe

Ye cannot know ;

Our flowers the spring will call in vain.

Our golden-hearted lilies,

That lasted but a day !—

Our gold-crowned daffodillies,
Whose crowns are dimmed for aye!—
O blossoms lost
In Death's long frost,
With you our spring-times fled away!

Yet see! the clouds are parting,
The storms are blowing o'er,
Soft radiant beams are darting
From yonder golden shore,
Where fair and bright,
In God's own light,
The spring-tide lasts for evermore.

December, 1868.

FOR AN OLD IRISH AIR.

“Scorching is this love.” *In Petrie's Collection.*

BRIGHT the morning hours,
Dark the storms that rose,
Dawn among the flowers,—
Night upon the snows.
Morning breezes gladly
Shook the laughing vines;
Now the ice-wind sadly
Moans among the pines.

Is there no returning
To the golden light?
Must this weary yearning
Ever end in night?

O to feel the springing
Of the dawn of day !
O to hear the singing
That is hushed for aye !

Mountains nearest heaven,
Pure and calm and blest,—
Rest to you is given,
Whence, O whence that rest ?
Did it come with hoping
Through long silent years ?
Did you find it, groping
Through grey mists of tears ?

Did the fires upheave you
Bursting from below,
Then in quiet leave you
Robed in spotless snow ?

Did great waters gushing
Through unfooted halls,
Upward madly rushing,
Build your granite walls?

We have felt the fire,—
Seas our hearts have drowned,—
Have we risen higher?
Peace have we found?
Burn, O sunset glory!
Flood those heights sublime!
Whisper through their story:
“Light at eventime!”

January, 1869.

MY ISLAND.

My island sprang in a single night,
Out of a desolate sea,—
A night of earthquake and lurid light,
And sorrowful mystery.
Ah desolate sea ! Ah night of storm !
My heart still keeps you its blessing warm,
For that royal gift to me.

The air for many a weary day
Had borne till it could no more ;—
The silent heats like a nightmare lay
On the gasping fevered shore ;—

And the sun with fixèd gorgon glance
Had turned the waves in their ceaseless dance
To a plane of molten ore.

The darkness came with a sense of fear,
But never a sense of rest,—
Invisible demons seemed listening near
The heavings of earth's full breast;
And doubt and labour, and grief and sin
Were written on all things without, within,
From east to the farthest west.

On such a night did my island rise
From the midmost ocean gloom;
The stars looked down with pitying eyes,
And the waters gave it room;
Far off in the depths were fiery throbs,
And hollow murmurs and bursting sobs,
And a mighty thunder boom.

Wet with the sea-foam's bitterest tears,
 Scorched with the flames' hot breath,—
Dark with the shadow of all the years
 In the sunless world beneath—
Shall ought avail in the world of day
To wipe those sorrowful stains away,
 To chase that shadow of Death?

The sea brought treasures of whitest sand
 And shells and delicate weeds,
And wingèd things from some better land
 Came bearing their precious seeds;
And palms arose with their stately grace,
And streams gushed out till the barren place
 Was bright with feathery reeds.

And ferns wove mystical trceries,
 And flowers their stores unrolled,
And creepers covered the giant trees
 With splendours all untold;

And sunshine flooded the avenues,
Hiding and blending their thousand hues
In quivering mists of gold.

I walk to-day in a grove of palms,
And my heart is full of praise,
For the joyous lights and blessed calms
That brighten on all my ways ;
For voices low in the evening air,
That whisper of hopes too sweet and fair
For human speech or gaze.

Alas ! alas ! for the one dark thought,
That knows the treacherous art
Of deadliest banes in roses wrought,
Or point of subtlest dart ;—
O what and if, in some night of pain,
The sea should arise and snatch again
This treasure of mine heart ?

Alas ! alas ! when that thought draws near,
I can no more praise, but pray ;
My heart sinks down in a swoon of fear,
Nor lists what the breezes say ;
The ferns are withered, the palm trees fall,
Once more the billows are over all,
And the gold is turned to grey !

May 25, 1872.

“WHAT WILT THOU HAVE ME
TO DO?”

O LORD, I pray: “What wilt Thou have me
do?”

From morn till eve and unto morn again;—
And still new mornings break from forth the blue,
And still in vain!

What meaneth it? That I perchance must learn
The blessedness of trusting Thee with all—
E'en with the barren years, whose harvests
turn

To bitterest gall;

38 *"What wilt Thou have me to Do?"*

Because the golden sheaves, which others bear,
For me might quite shut out the golden sun,
The Eshcol clusters hide the Canaan where

Such grapes are won?

Alas, for one ripe sheaf to call mine own;
One purple cluster that my hands might hold,
And lay it on the steps before Thy throne,

Ere life be cold!

One sheaf—the smallest, poorest, on the lea,—
One cluster—though the least upon the vine,—
One ear, one grape,—so I might give to Thee

What first was Thine!

Yet, Lord, Thou knowest, and we cannot know;
Thou seest what to us is dim and faint;—

What am I, that my prayers to murmurs grow

And sad complaint?

This only grant me : If I may not grasp
Thee with Thy gifts, O free my hands from them
To keep in one despairing, deathless clasp
Thy garment's hem !

Christmas, 1871.

CIVIL WARS.

REST despises motion,
Motion frowns on rest ;
Quiet lakes scorn ocean
With his troubled breast ;
Ocean proudly tosses
His defiance back :—
“ Who fear greatest losses
Greatest gains must lack.”

Passive contemplation
Looks askance on work,
Thinks, in strong pulsation
Needs must evil lurk.

Reason crushes coldly
Fancy's golden wings ;
Fancy over-boldly
Taunts at Reason flings.

Depth and Breadth for ever
Wage a deadly strife ;
Only meet to sever
On the ways of life.
“ Shallow-hearted spirit !
Depth says. Breadth replies :
“ Narrow souls inherit
Narrow destinies !”

Noble foes ! contending
Diversely for Right,
Only in your blending
May you win the fight !
O to see the union

Of your mighty names,
Sharing in communion
Visions, forces, aims!—
“Truce of God”—now given
Earth in gleams of peace!
Earth must change to heaven,
Ere this warfare cease.

February 1, 1869.

BURIED FIRES.¹

WHEN the day is done,
And the red, red sun
Is with other lands than ours,—
Whence have we the light
That we need, while night
Is hushing the sleeping flowers?

O the moon, you say,
Gets her silver ray
From the golden-hearted king;

¹ It is a theory of Professor Tyndall and others, that the light in coal is a reproduction of the rays stored up by plants in bygone ages.

Buried Fires.

And her trust is still
The heaven to fill
With light from his burning spring.

And the stars arise,
And their thousand eyes
Bend lovingly over earth;
And the planets fare
Through the fields of air
That know no withering dearth.

But the light that comes
To our hearths and homes
From the dreary darkened mine,—
That the embers throw
With a ruddy glow,—
Whence hath it the power to shine?

They tell us, the men
Of the eagle ken,
That in times remote from these
The sun sent it down,
For the joy and crown
Of the stately forest trees.

And deeper it sank,
For the leaves all drank,
And the heart of the woodland swelled;
And the trees grew old,
As the long years rolled,
The uncounted years of Eld.

And they all found rest
In the earth's still breast,
The pine and the creeping wreath;
And the sun's great gift
Was too weak to lift
One life from the grasp of death.

And beauty was lost
In the hard black frost
That had laid the forest low,—
Marred the fair tree-forms
That had stood fierce storms,
In the depths of long-ago.

Yet each dying heart
Kept its own bright part,
As a miser keeps his gold;
Or as one, whose life
Is a weary strife,
Keeps a secret joy untold.

And the light was grieved,—
It had been deceived,
It seemed, by the sun above;
It had found a grave
In a darksome cave,
Instead of a work of love.

But at length, at length,
Spake a voice of strength
That bade it arise and do ;
And the leaping flame
At its bidding came,
And its greeting warms us through.

It hath cheered the gloom
Of a shuttered room,
And lightened a load of pain ;
O buried years,
Full of doubts and fears,
To-night is your meaning plain !

And it gives us hope,
We who seem to grope
In barren and darkened ways,
That our work is set,
Though hidden as yet
Like that of the prisoned rays !

“ Though it tarry, wait ;”
Because, soon or late,
The powers which God has given
Will find out the end,
Whereunto they tend,
Be that end in earth or heaven.

So we guard our spark,
Though the night be dark,
And the spark be faint and dim,
Till God’s mighty call
On the silence fall,
And summon it forth for Him.

March 19, 1869.

SUNSET.

O SUN ! at morn we understand

Why all the heaven is bright,
And messages to sea and land
Go forth in throbs of light;—

And if at noontide there is haze,

The meaning we can guess,
For thou would'st hide from mortal gaze
Thy royal weariness.

But when across the purple bars

Eve draws her curtains down,
And through the folds the little stars
Steal forth to take thy crown,—

And bright things fade, and glad things grieve,
And joy becometh rest,—
Why then such wealth of splendour weave
About the glowing west?

O tell us, tell us golden king!
We are athirst to hear!
Our morn is past, noon vanishing,
And evening very near;

And we have laughed and sighed awhile
And now we fain would know
The secret of the crimson smile,
The burning after-glow.

We fear lest this our hazy sky
Should never clear again,
Day sink to night all wearily
In mists and drizzling rain;

Lest black wings stretch across our sun
Till sunset time is o'er,
And blot the sunbeams one by one,
Till they can shine no more.

O send one ray, one angel ray,
And make him swift and strong
To flash into our hearts to-day
The light for which we long ;

To show us how there comes to thee,
Athwart the darkening blue,
Sweet certain hope of morn to be,
Thrilling the evening through ;

Till mists and clouds to glories turn,—
Ah, strange transfiguring power,
That makes the dying sunset burn
Like dawn's first rosiest hour !

January 19, 1872.

AT THE RIVER'S MOUTH.

QUIET waters, soon to be
Mingled with the bounding sea,—
Rippling o'er with hope and fear,
As your destiny draws near,—
Pause a moment, giving thanks
Landward, to your sheltering banks;
Seaward, to the ships that rest
Trustfully upon your breast;
Heavenward, to the summer sky,
Where the bright cloud-islands lie;
Showing each its own bright part
In the treasures of your heart.

TRANSLATION OF A SWEDISH SONG.

"Tænk nogen gang."

THINK now and then of one who still is keeping
Thine image hidden deep within his heart ;
But only now, when all the world is sleeping,
Dares think of thee, and bid all else depart.

Think now and then, in plucking bud or flower,
Of one, whose life has such a slender store ;
On whom the shade of one dark solemn hour
Still hangs to cloud the sunshine evermore.

And when at eve the little boats are swaying
So gently on the ocean's golden breast,
Remember then that one for thee is praying,
That God would bless thee with His perfect rest.

Once more,—when stars are peeping forth from
heaven

With loving messages for earth and sea!

But should no thought of thine to me be given,

My last night-thoughts will still be prayers for thee.

March, 1863.

LIFE'S MYSTERY.

Debemur morti nos nostraque.

"I give unto them eternal life."

WHY should all growing beauty bring

A subtle thrill of pain?

Why should the happy spring-time sing

A chastened, pensive strain?

The sunny morning, as she rolls

The darkness from the skies,

Draw shadows over human souls,

And tears to human eyes?

And thrushes' songs, and New-year's chimes,

And brooks and children's glee,—

Why seems their music all, at times,

Set in a minor key?

Is it the peevish wailing cry
Of selfish human hearts,
That drowns the joyous harmony
Of nature's many parts?
Or do the sweetest undertones
Of life's great swelling chord
But gather up creation's groans
In one deep-whispered word?

O mystery of life in death,
That wraps this world of ours,
And in the same fast-fading wreath,
Twines man's lot with the flowers!
O strange sad law that every day
Writes deeper on the earth,
Proclaiming growth a long decay,
And death begun with birth!

How could they bear the deadly weight
Of such a crushing doom,

Who only saw relentless fate
 Frowning athwart the gloom?
Brave souls, whose span of earth was passed
 In groping for the light,
Which yet we trust shall burst at last
 Upon their longing sight.

How could *we* bear it, poorer far
 In native strength than they,
Unless the wise men's guiding star
 Had shone upon our way;
Unless the strength that rules above
 The waves of doubt and strife
Had linked for us in bands of love
 Eternity with life?

March 5, 1869.

REACTIONS.

EXULT not overmuch, thou bounding sea,
Because thy waves are dashing up the cliffs
So far above their wont, and sending on
Their vanguard to explore the cavern depths
And ferny combes and treasures of the land.
For know that in that swift advance is hid
The pledge of thy return,—that every inch
Thy billows gain upon the rocky shore
Shall have its mocking counterpart far out
Among the shoals and shallows. O be wise,
And spend not all thy rich exuberance
In idly sporting with thy foaming crests,
But hoard a tithe against the dreary days

Of pulseless languors, when thy ebbing tides
 Shall feebly moan upon the shelving sands.
 Yet when those days shall come, be comforted ;
 The very law that in the time of flood
 Restrained thy pride, is strong to give thee hope
 In time of ebb : the lower thou art fallen,
The higher shalt thou rise !—

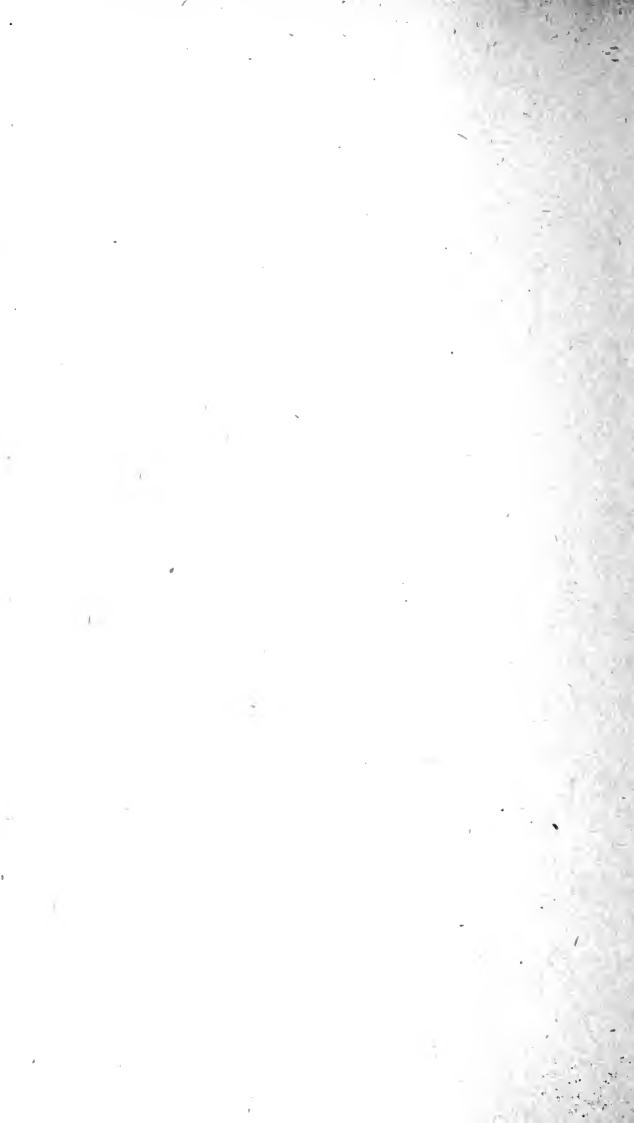
O restless heart

Whose deeps are stirred by currents mightier
 Than those of great Atlantic, scorn thou not
 This message, borne to thee by soulless waves :
 Thou hast thy springtide seasons, brimming o'er
 With life and gladness ; waste them not in moods
 Of idleness or vain complacency.
 But pour thy blessings on the thirsty sands
 And fainting flowers, not *always* within reach.
 The time will surely come when thou shalt need
 Such memories to give thee strength and hope.
 For highest floods and lowest ebbs are linked

One to another with as strong a chain
Within us as without ; these following those
With certainty, which while it brightens hours
Of deepest gloom, yet casts a shade of fear
Upon the brightest. O sad, wearying thought !
Must we be ever veering to and fro,
The sport of currents and inconstant tides?
Must such a costly price indeed be paid
For all advancement? May no height be gained
But by an after-fall of equal depth?
Then were it better to mistrust and fear
All onward progress,—to avoid the heights
And keep the level pathways, where at least
We may be safe from precipices!—Yet once more
Take courage, troubled heart, and learn again
A lesson from the sea. Mark how the waves
In seeming to recede, are gaining ground
With every fresh advance. Be such thy course
Through life's vicissitudes, till life shall end.

In better life, where change can only be
From great to greater,—high to higher still ;
Where lesser currents shall be lost and merged
In one great ebbless tide of peace and joy.

December 9, 1868.



SONNETS.



DUMB POETS.

"God has made many poets, but He has given a voice to few."—*Longfellow*.

I.

O VOICELESS Poet, whosoe'er thou art,
 That mournest over dreams thou can'st not tell
 In words, or sounds, or pictures,—yet which dwell
 Like golden pansies set within thy heart
 And memory,—to blossom there apart
 For thee alone!—Let no seducing thought
 Tempt thee to look upon all dreams as nought,
 But such as human language can impart.
 To *have* thy visions is a greater gift
 Than any power to tell them. God knows all,
 Perhaps He sees expression would so lift
 Thy swelling heart that it would work thy fall;
 Perhaps He wills thou should'st rejoice the more
 To hear his "Ephphatha" on Heaven's shore.

II.

THOU poor dumb spirit, chafing at the spell
Which keeps thee thinking, dreaming on by stealth
When thou wouldst pour thy great God-given wealth
Profusely forth to gladden where it fell!
Remember,—*all* were not allowed to tell
How Christ their eyes had opened! It may be
Another mission is reserved for thee;—
The chorus of His praise on earth to swell
By deeper notes,—to show thy golden dreams
Their brightness, calmness, beauty, glory, joy—
In outer actions, shedding purer beams
Because more free than words from self's alloy.
Ah! then indeed thou dreamest not in vain,
Thy seeming loss shall prove thy truest gain.

“THE NIGHT COMETH WHEN NO
MAN CAN WORK.”

WE do not well to let the years go by
In idly dreaming what our work shall be,
For *while* we dream—lo! evening stealthily
Draws round us lengthening shadows; night
winds sigh

Among the soul's waste places, and the sky
Is red with sunset warning. What if night
Surprise us on the mountains? Or a light
Shining from east to west proclaim Him nigh
Who comes to try our work, what sort it is,
Wood, hay, or stubble, precious stones or gold?
Dare we confront that searching gaze of His,
Vaunting our buried wealth like one of old?
Dare we reply, that all our journey through
No work that came was great enough to do?

SONNET FROM SWITZERLAND.

WE rest at last upon the rocky height,
The granite fortress "walled up to heaven,"
And watch tired mules, up craggy pathways driven,
And laden peasants winding out of sight.
O Thou that sittest on the mount of light,
The crowning summit of the universe,
Beholding all the wanderings perverse,
The burdens sore, the fallings infinite
Of men and women toiling up to Thee,
Dost Thou not know the tale of ev'ry load,
And wilt Thou not by ways we cannot see
Bring every toiler to Thine own abode?
Doth not Thy heaven earth's proudest height
 exceed?
Shall not Thy love outlast man's longest need?

September, 1872.

“IF I SHOULD MEET AN ANGEL.”

IF I should meet an angel in the way,—
 Or seeing none, should hear the gracious voice
 That made blind Bartimæus once rejoice,
 Turning his life-long darkness into day,—
 And should that voice seek out my soul and say :
 “ What shall be done for thee? Which cloud of all
 The great cloud-mysteries whose shadows fall
 Across the earth, shall I roll back? What ray
 Send brightly on thy path?” I would reply:
 “ Show me the work that Thou hast set for me
On earth, O Lord ! Let not my inner eye
Go wrong herein,—be dazzled hopelessly
By seeming cross-lights !” This thing would I ask,
 Certain of all, if certain of my task.

“HOLD THOU UP MY GOINGS IN
THY PATHS.”

THE child who walks upon the rugged brink
Of some great Alpine chasm, may pale with fear,
Although he feel his father's presence near
And hold his very hand. He needs must think
Upon the end, should weary footsteps shrink,
Dim eyes grow blind with scanning the abyss,
Weak fingers cold with fear's paralysis ;
He needs must pray : “ O, father, lest I sink,
Keep fast my trembling hand within thine own,
That firm strong grasp that never loses hold,
For darkness, weariness or stumbling stone ! ”—
Weak children are we all ! Dear Lord, enfold
Within Thy strength our weakness, leading still
Our faltering steps up to Thy holy hill.

FLOATING CLOUDS.

CLOUD seraphim that skim the depths of blue,
And flush with joy in turning to the west,
And moving ever, ever seem to rest,
O teach us to rejoice and rest like you !
For joy with us is restless, through and through,
And rest too often like a stagnant pool,
Where noxious weeds o'erspread the waters cool,
And hide from them the sky's all-gladdening hue.
But joy with you is full of peace divine,
And peace is joyful progress into light,
And light glows steadily with tender shine,
Unlike the flashes of our stormy night.
Peace, light and joy melt into one, above,
Floating in golden atmosphere of love.

MEETING TORRENTS.

Two torrents thundered down a mountain side,
Parted by granite masses piled with snow,
Each hiding its unrest and joy and woe
Deep in the gorge where God had said, "Abide."
But all at once He bade the rocks divide,
The snow-piles melt, the granite gates unclose,
And straightway from the meeting streams arose
Triumphant bursts of music. Terrified,
Wet ferns looked up, and questioned all amazed
About the desolation that should be
In such a meeting. But tall pines that gazed
Adown the vale whispered: "We only see
A peaceful river! How could we have guessed
That doubled restlessness would make a Rest?"

A DREAM.

(Dreamed on the night of September 26, 1871.)

I DREAMED, and lo ! a tempest great and strong,
That rent the hills and shook the level ground,
As in Elijah's vision. Then a sound
Of mingled wind and fire, and swift along
A row of elms, that moaned a dirge-like song,
Came sweeping up a red devouring wave.
Each swaying tree-top to its neighbour gave
The burning gift : " And now to right all wrong,
To solve all doubts, and make all dimness clear,
The ' still, small voice ' shall speak," I softly said,
And listened as all sense had been an ear,
All thought an ecstasy of longing dread.
Alas ! no whisper came the void to fill,—
And I awoke, to long and listen still.

October 15, 1871.

“NEL MEZZO DEL CAMMIN DI
NOSTRA VITA.”

MIDWAY upon the journey of our life,
Dante, like thee I find myself to-day,
Within a dreary wood with dangers rife,
And tangles that have blotted all the way.
The heavy boughs, when I look up to pray,
Shut out like frowns the loving face of heaven,
And wailing voices rise in them and say :
“What but unrest to thee shall e'er be given?”
God knoweth whether on the farther side
Of these dark branches be fair sunny glades,
Where He at length my weary steps shall guide
To rest awhile before the daylight fades ;
Or if through forest gloom shall come to me
The shimmer of the everlasting sea.

October 15, 1871.

FEAR NO MORE THE HEAT O' THE SUN,
NOR THE FURIOUS WINTER'S RAGES ;
THOU THY WORLDLY TASK HAST DONE,
HOME ART GONE, AND TA'EN THY WAGES.

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